

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1, 9 and 12 were objected to based on matters of language, which have been corrected by this response. In addition, claims 2, 4 and 9 were rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention. By this response, the matters of language noted by the Examiner have been addressed, so that the claims are believed to fully comply with the requirements of 35 USC §112, second paragraph.

Claims 1-6, 9-14 and 18 were rejected under 35 USC §102(a) as being anticipated by Henry published U.S. patent application 2003/0230608. Claim 17 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Henry in view of Wilcke U.S. Patent 3,285,426.

The Henry reference discloses a trailer hitch holder that includes elongated pockets 34 within which the stem 22 of a ball mount 12 is received. The ball mount 12 is engaged with the ball mount holder by sliding the ball mount stem 22 into the pocket 34 in an axial direction, i.e. along the longitudinal axis of the ball mount stem 22. Each pocket includes locking apertures 40, which are configured to receive a locking member 42 that extends through the transverse aperture 26 in the ball mount when the transverse aperture 26 is aligned with the pocket apertures 40. The locking members 42 are joined by a plate 44. The locking members 42 and plate 44 are an assembly that is separate from the holder 10.

Claim 1 has been amended to call for a mounting member configured to be attached to the vehicle, and a bracket arrangement extending outwardly from the mounting member. The bracket arrangement is defined as including at least one outwardly open recess that receives the support member of the trailer hitch. Claim 1 states that the outwardly open recess of the bracket arrangement is configured to receive the support member upon movement of the support member toward the mounting member into the open recess in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis of the support member. Claim 1 also calls for a hanger carried by and extending outwardly from the mounting member. The hanger is

defined as being configured to extend into the pin-receiving opening of the support member of the trailer hitch upon movement of the support member toward the mounting member into the open recess.

The Henry reference does not show or suggest the subject matter of amended claim 1. As noted above, in Henry, the trailer hitch is engaged with the holder by sliding the trailer hitch stem into a pocket defined by the holder in a direction along the longitudinal axis of the trailer hitch stem. In direct contrast, claim 1 calls for an outwardly open recess, which is not shown or suggested by Henry, into which the support member of the trailer hitch is positioned upon movement of the support member toward the mounting member in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis of the support member.

In addition, in Henry, the ball mount is maintained in engagement with the holder by engaging the locking member 42 through the transverse opening in the stem and through the aligned openings in the holder. The locking member is part of an assembly that is separate from the holder, which thus creates the potential for the locking member to be misplaced, lost or otherwise removed from the vicinity of the holder. Again, in direct contrast, claim 1 states that the hanger is carried by and extends outwardly from the mounting member, which is not shown or suggested by the Henry reference.

For the above reasons, claim 1 is believed to patentably define over the Henry reference. A review of the remaining references of record similarly fails to show or suggest the claimed subject matter, and accordingly claim 1 is believed allowable.

Claims 2-11 depend directly or indirectly from claim 1, and are believed allowable for the above reasons as well as in view of the subject matter of each claim. Claims 7 and 8 are properly reinstated for consideration, since claim 1 is generic to all embodiments of the present invention as set forth in the drawing figures.

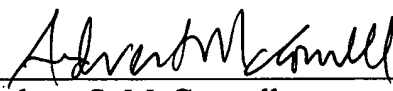
Claim 12 has been amended along the same lines as amended claim 1. For the reasons noted above with respect to claim 1, it is thus believed that claim 12 also patentably defines over Henry as well as the remaining references of record. Accordingly, claim 12 is believed allowable along with dependent claims 13-15, 17 and 18. Again, claim 15 is

properly reinstated for consideration since claim 12 is generic to all embodiments of the present invention as disclosed.

Applicant's attorney has made every effort to place the application into condition for allowance with claims 1-15, 17 and 18, and such action is earnestly requested.

The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned by phone if questions remain after consideration of this response, or if such would otherwise facilitate prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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Amendments to the Drawings:

Please make the drawing corrections as shown on the attached sheets, in which revisions to the drawings are shown in red ink.